Proprio in questo aspetto risiede uno dei maggiori pregi dello studio di Chirumbolo, che esalta il valore ideologico-politico e gnoseologico della narrativa d'avanguardia degli anni Sessanta, ribadendone la "funzione conoscitiva, e non esclusivamente rappresentativa, della realtà" (66).

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Stefania Lucamante. *A Multitude of Women: The Challenges of the Contemporary Italian Novel*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. Pp. 324. \$70. ISBN 978-0-8020-9794-4.

In the now classic work, *The Resisting Reader*, Judith Fetterley (1978: xiii) pointed out over thirty years ago that to be excluded from a literature that claims to define one's identity is to experience a particular form of powerlessness, one which results in an endless division of the female writer against herself. Female writers, like their male counterparts, negotiate the boundaries of the canon and their historical situation by including in their writings what has been excluded. It is this relational dynamic that Stefania Lucamante will analyze in the works of the recent writings of Elena Ferrante, Mariateresa Di Lascia, Ippolita Avalli, Pia Pera, Simona Vinci, Francesca Mazzucato and Melania Mazzucco. Within this context she studies as well the more recent developments in the works of long-standing feminist writer, Dacia Maraini.

In three long and pithy chapters, Lucamante examines how these Italian women writers relate to three issues while negotiating the Italian "canon" and their status as women in contemporary Italian society. Italian women have primarily three main choices when they write novels: they can try to write from outside any male-dominated canon, they can rewrite the mother's works, or they can deconstruct male writings. Professor Lucamante deals with all three types, organizing her chapters around three main themes: the mother-daughter relationship, the father-daughter relationship, and the issue of literary representations of sexual politics. Thus, Lucamante not only states but shows that there is no one way to examine new works but rather a variety of approaches in order to bring out the themes of continuity and rupture in these works.

In Chapter 1, "Writing is Always Playing With the Mother's Body," Lucamante shows how Di Lascia's *Passaggio in Ombra* and Vinci's *Come prima delle madri* problematize Moranti's good vs. evil binary in order to recall the mother while, at the same time, going beyond mere imitation or refutation. Ferrante's *Il giorno dell'abbandono* is a rewriting of Simone de Beauvoir's *La femme rompue*, although Ferrante writes both to show more empathy with the situation of the abandoned women and to expound upon it. In her detailed and informative analyses, Lucamante also brings into play the role the Southern ethos of fatality plays in the works of these women so that they can negotiate the evil side of the moth-

er, her representation as death and suffocation, and turn it into viable, yet not completely foolproof alternatives. The opposite side of this coin is Chapter 2, the father-daughter relationship, a rapport that for most Italian feminist writers did not provide the needed nurture that can be found in the same relationship in the works of other European or American women writers. Avalli's *La Dea dei baci* and Mazzucato's *Storia di una ossessione* are indeed attempts to refute the sacrificial role of the daughter found in many former feminist narratives, although the possibility of searching for and finding other father figures is not negated. This chapter concludes with an original analysis of Pia Pera's scandalous rewriting of *Lolita*, a literary confrontation of the father, a much maligned work by critics as an example of "aesthetic and literary vampirism", as described in the lawsuit against Pera by Nabokov's son (164). Lucamante shows well how this literary parody, while not presenting a likeable female character, pays satirical homage to the father by showing what results can be obtained when we play by his literary rules.

In her final chapter "Italian Sexual Patho-Politics Revisited," Lucamante provides good insights into how feminism and writing have muted Maraini's stance on abortion in a way that hardly betrays feminist beliefs since she delves more deeply into the question of whether or not abortion is a choice in a patriarchal society. Lucamante contrasts Maraini's writings in the 1990s with a Freudian and "queering" reading of Mazzucco's *Il bacio della Medusa*. As in other chapters, Lucamante, well-versed in a variety of critical methods, successfully teases out of these texts the existence and function of coexisting mythical, psychoanalytical and political subtexts.

Most importantly, Lucamante's book shows us that instead of feeling compelled to argue for extrinsic value to women's writing and their singularity, we need more of Calvino's Ludmillas who, after reading books, know how to turn themselves into critics able to explain to others what those books were about, and whether or not they marry the author. If we read and analyze professionally contemporary women's writing we will be able to see whom these writers are canonizing, and how they are doing it. The work of any critic is to trace and explain these pathways rather than to define what should be written or how these women are not making the grade. Lucamante's readings of a multitude of women who deal with a multitude of ever changing texts and contexts is a big step in the right direction for critics of Italian women's writing today.

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The importance of Italian and, in general, Southern European culture to the artistic development of many of the cardinal figures of Anglo-American modernism is